

<sup>2</sup> OWCP assigned the present claim OWCP File No. xxxxxx506. OWCP previously accepted a December 29, 2014 traumatic injury claim for a right knee sprain and tear of right knee medial meniscus under OWCP File No. xxxxxx849. It subsequently denied a November 8, 2018 occupational disease claim for an aggravation of the previously accepted right knee condition under OWCP File No. xxxxxx461.

of even date, she explained that after receiving medical care on April 17, 2019 she subsequently returned to work on April 21, 2019, but experienced increased pain in her knees during her shift, causing her to stop work and seek further medical treatment.

By decision dated July 17, 2019, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim finding that the medical evidence of record was insufficient to establish that her knee osteoarthritis was causally related to the accepted factors of her federal employment. It found, therefore, that she had not met the requirements to establish an injury as defined by FECA.

On July 23, 2019 appellant, through counsel, timely requested a telephonic hearing before a representative of OWCP's Branch of Hearings and Review. The hearing was held on November 15, 2019. Counsel clarified that he was pursuing the present claim for bilateral knee osteoarthritis, which he argued was caused or aggravated by her previously accepted right knee conditions under OWCP File No. xxxxxx849. Accordingly, counsel requested that the present claim be administratively combined with the previous claim as adjudication would require frequent cross referencing of both claims.

By decision dated January 29, 2020, OWCP's hearing representative affirmed the July 17, 2019 decision, finding that the November 4, 2019 medical report was insufficient to establish a causal relationship between appellant's knee osteoarthritis and the factors of her federal employment.

On January 28, 2021 appellant, through counsel, requested reconsideration and submitted additional evidence in support of her request.

By decision dated April 1, 2021, OWCP denied modification of its January 29, 2020 decision.

The Board, having duly considered this matter, finds that this case is not in posture for decision.

OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files. For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition or the same part of the body, doubling is required. Herein, appellant's claim under OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx849 and xxxxxx461 also involved injuries to the knees. Therefore, for full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record under OWCP File No. xxxxxx506 with OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx849 and xxxxxx461, so it can consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in adjudicating appellant's current traumatic injury claim.

Following this and other such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision.

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the April 1, 2021 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: May 12, 2022  
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Deputy Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Janice B. Askin, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board